

US-VA History SOL Review Materials – Settling in America



The Spanish: First and Cruellest



The Spanish “discovery” of North America was perhaps accidental, but their purposes were not when they arrived. Armed with guns, germs (smallpox in particular), steel weapons, and domesticated animals, the Spanish took over using violent force to enslave Native Americans. “God, Gold, and Glory!” This, coupled with a religious zealotry which rationalized even the most brutal practices in the minds of the conquistadors, led to devastation.

The English: Land Hungry, Violent



The English colonists in the Americas were less zealous in their desire to convert Indians to Christianity, but encroached upon their land heavily. Englishmen were frequently involved in fighting with the Indians due to competition for land and resources, as in the picture above in Jamestown, 1622. Compared to the French – who were devoted to trade and much more tolerant of religious differences and cooperative with Native Americans – both the English and the Spanish were brutal conquerors.

Jamestown: The First Permanent English Colony in the New World

Jamestown was the first permanent English Colony, established in 1607 by a joint-stock company – the Virginia Company of London – as a business venture. Recall that the Lost Colony of Roanoke Island had mysteriously disappeared in the 1580s.



Jamestown is also responsible for two other firsts – very different in nature:

- I. The first representative assembly in the New World, the Virginia House of Burgesses, was established in 1619.
- II. In the same year, the first slaves were brought to Jamestown.

The New England Colonies

The New England colonies were generally settled by people seeking an end to religious persecution, like the Puritans and the Pilgrims.

The Puritans signed the Mayflower Compact, and believed in direct democracy via town meetings – within strict religious parameters.



Although they came to America seeking to escape religious persecution themselves, the Puritans and the Pilgrims were not devoted to religious toleration – in fact, they hanged some dissenters.

New England Colonies

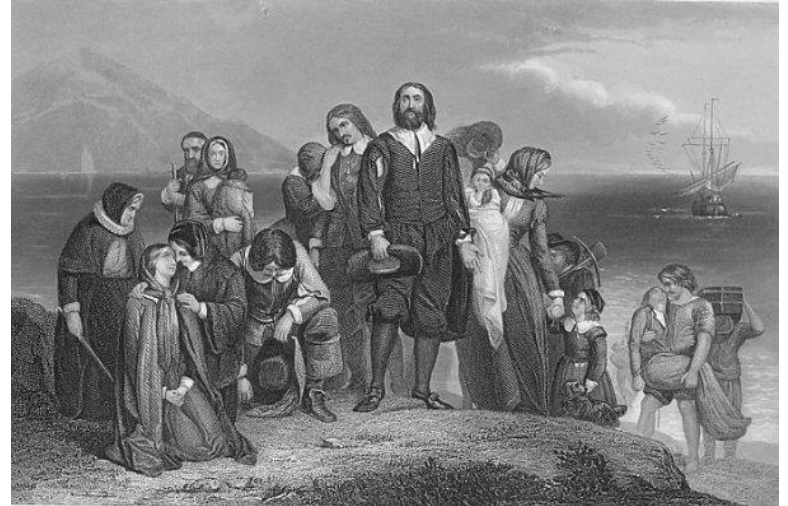
- Shipbuilding
- Fishing
- Lumbering
- Small Farms
- Manufacturing

In the New England colonies, the Puritan values of hard work and thrift were much celebrated in a diverse economy.



New England Society

There was a strong relationship between Church and State, and religious dissenters were kicked out of Massachusetts, for example. Social standing in most of the New England colonies depended upon your standing in a particular church. Dissenters founded both Rhode Island and Connecticut.



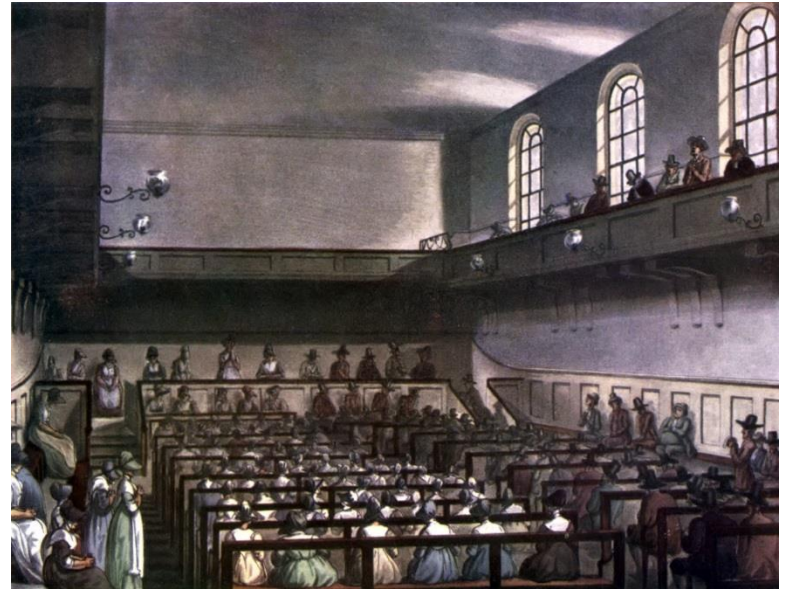
John Winthrop said that his followers would be “as a City Upon a Hill.” Everyone would see whether or not they dealt justly with their God – and they would be judged – by man and by God – accordingly.

In New England, there were town hall meetings and direct democracy.



The Middle Colonies

Most of the Middle Colonies were much more devoted to toleration. They were very diverse regions in terms of nationalities and religion. In the Middle colonies, there was much economic opportunity. The Middle colonists were pro-business.



Members of the Quaker faith – such as Pennsylvania's William Penn – were devoted to religious toleration and treating all men equally – even Native Americans.

Middle Colonies

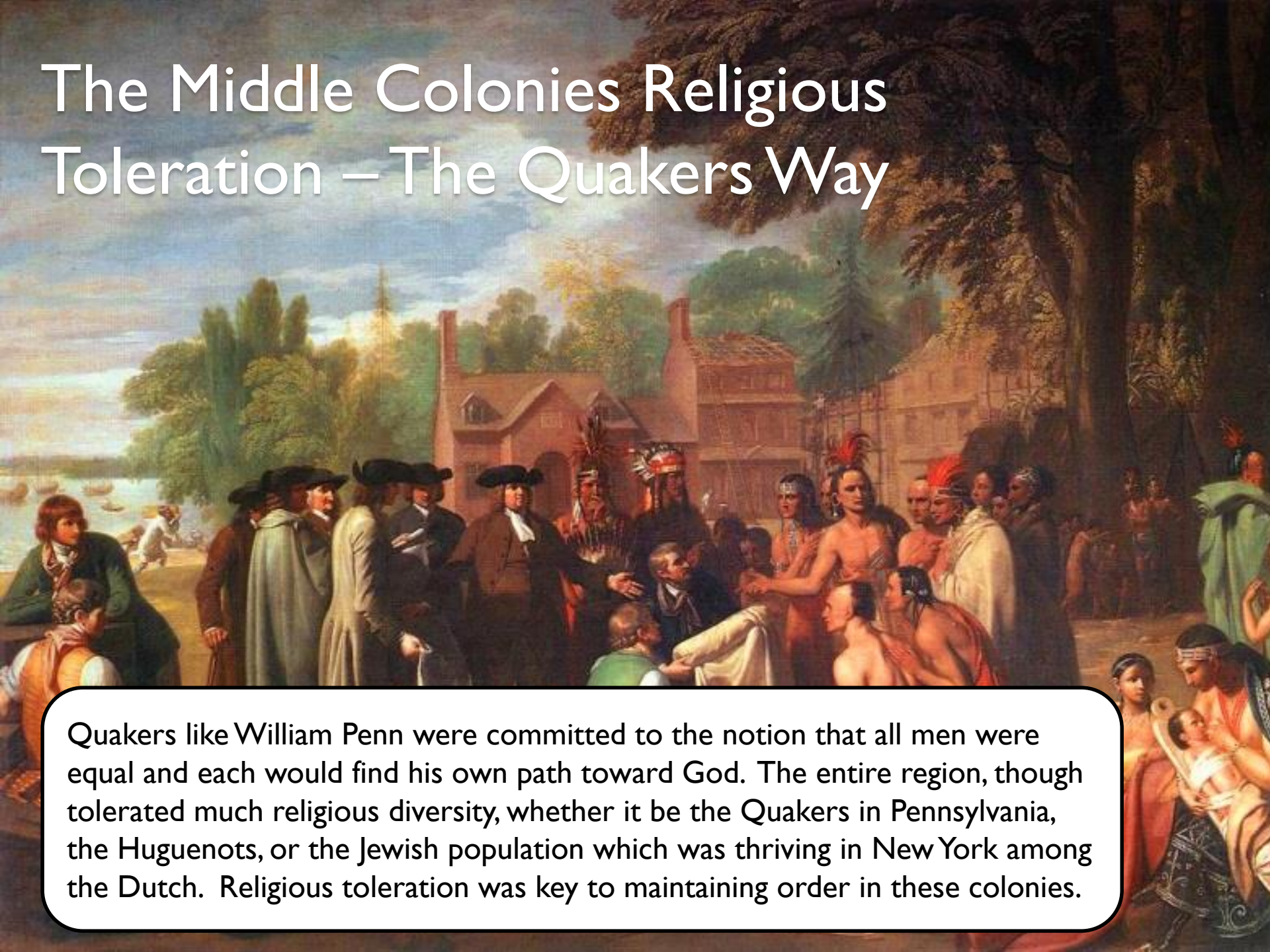
The Middle Colonies were characterized by economic opportunity in many diverse fields, too.

- Shipbuilding
- Small farms, especially wheat
- Commercial centers for trade: New York, Philadelphia



Shipbuilding was a major industry in the Middle Colonies, which often engaged in trade – selling wheat and fish to the islands of the Caribbean for sugar, rum, or other imported goods.

The Middle Colonies Religious Toleration – The Quakers Way



Quakers like William Penn were committed to the notion that all men were equal and each would find his own path toward God. The entire region, though tolerated much religious diversity, whether it be the Quakers in Pennsylvania, the Huguenots, or the Jewish population which was thriving in New York among the Dutch. Religious toleration was key to maintaining order in these colonies.



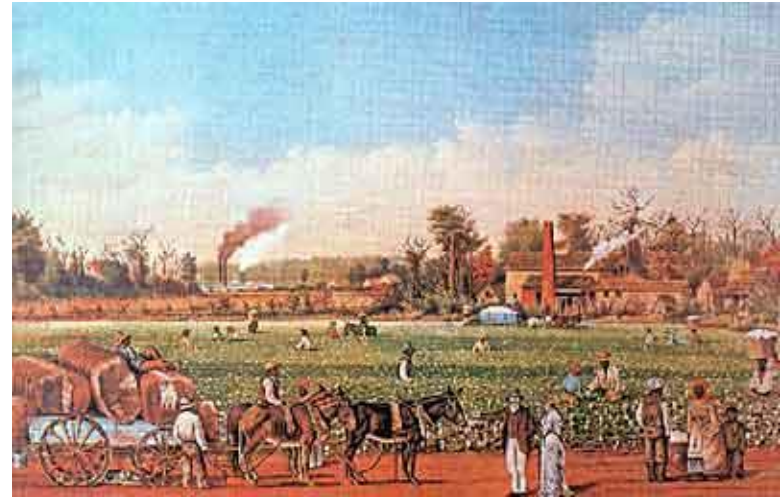
Middle Colonies Government

The Middle Colonies were very devoted to democratic principles. The right to vote was restricted only by a property requirement – and land was easy to come by here.

The Rights of Englishmen were guarded jealously in all of the colonies, especially in the Middle Colonies.

The Southern Colonies

The Carolinas and several of the Chesapeake colonies relied heavily on plantation agriculture. Cash crops like rice, indigo, and tobacco were common in the early colonial years. These colonies would come to rely on slave labor, which had been common practice in the Caribbean. Virginia first received shipments of slaves at Jamestown in 1619.



Southern colonies attempted to enslave Indians first, but increasingly relied on indentured servants and slaves to run their rice, indigo, and tobacco plantations in the 17th and 18th Centuries.

The Southern Colonies

The Southern Colonies had two different economies really. In the tidewater area, plantations grew cash crops like rice, indigo, and tobacco – cotton would come along later.

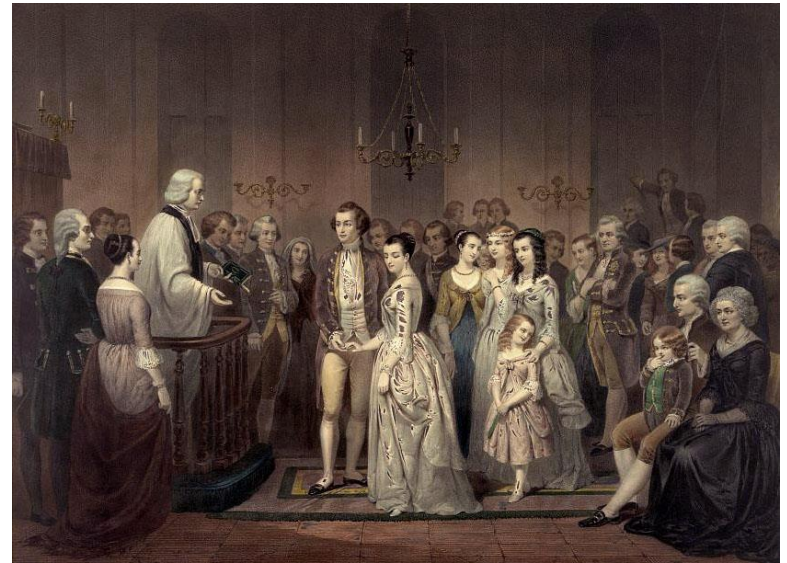
In the backcountry, most Southerners were small subsistence farmers.



Wealthy plantation owners exported their cash crops; poor small farmers grew food and subsistence goods only.

Southern Colonies Society

In Southern Society, the standing of families was measured by proximity to power in the government and wealth – which was measured in the land one owned. Social status was not easily achieved, and small farmers had little opportunity to move up in social status.



George Washington knew how to make his way up in Southern society. He married the wealthy widow, Martha Custis in his youth, thus inheriting her vast landholdings. This was the way to power in the South. He loved her, too. Perfect wedding...



Southern Political System

For all practical purposes, wealthy plantation owners exercised all of the power in Southern Society.

It was the least democratic region. Many small landowners were not represented in the state legislatures. Slaves and indentured servants were completely without political power.

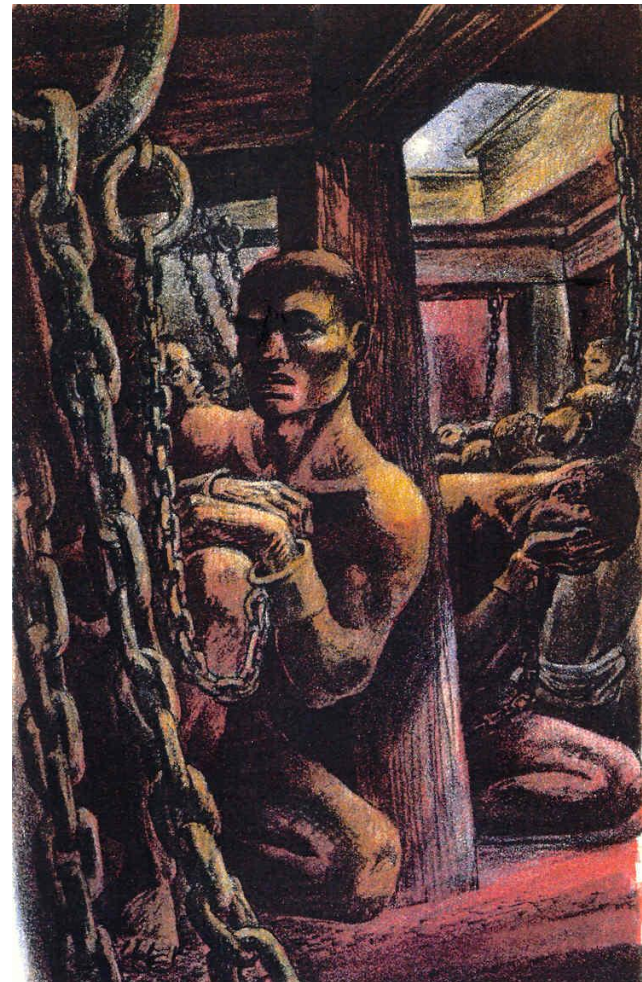
Indentured Servants



Indentured servants generally signed a four to seven year contract to work in exchange for passage to the New World. If they lived through the term – and most did not due to disease in the Chesapeake and Southern Colonies – they would inherit land, tools, and some small payment from their sponsors. By the late 1700s, the system was in decline because purchasing enslaved laborers was cheaper and more efficient, even if it was morally reprehensible and unconscionable.

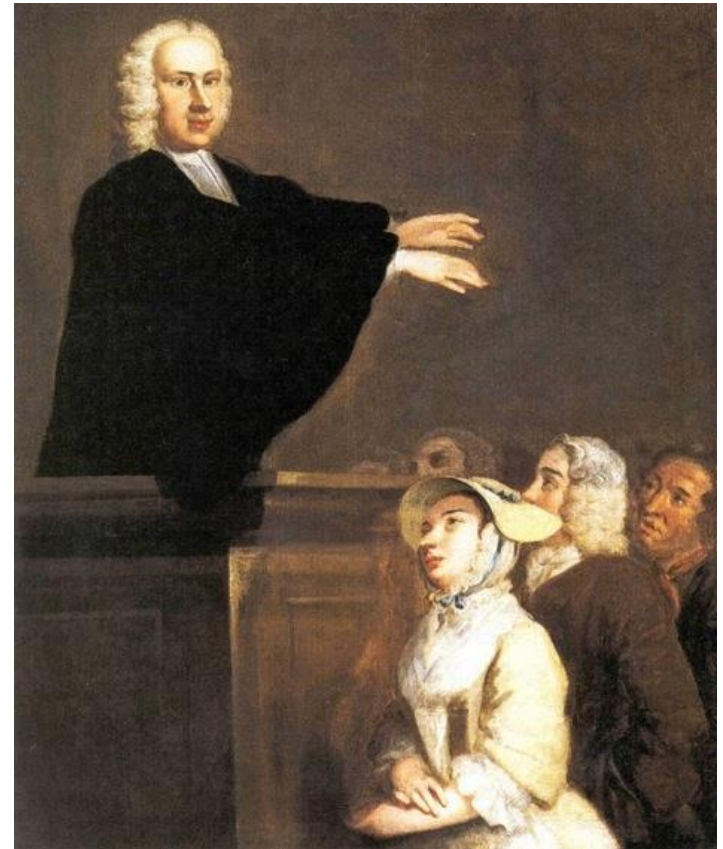
The Enslaved

The first slaves were brought to Jamestown in 1619 and may have been treated as indentured servants; however, by the 1640s, enslaved people were being imported and a system of race-based, hereditary slavery was flourishing in the South. Cash crops like rice required slave laborers who were expert at growing the produce. Slaves were horribly abused and offered no opportunities for social mobility.



The Great Awakening led to the Revolutionary War... over time.

The Great Awakening was a movement among Methodist and Baptist ministers who preached that men and women must have a personal relationship with God to find salvation. It undermined the importance of Church membership and made the ministers of local churches diminished in terms of importance. Many historians argue that the Great Awakening legitimized dissent against the ministers and Churches – which in turn led to dissent against England!



Laissez-Faire Free Enterprise

Throughout the American colonies, the private ownership of property was commonly accepted as a part of natural law, and free enterprise for business was expected. What a man made with his own hands was his – whether that be ironworks or what he grew on his farm.

Charging high prices for goods, however, was considered usury and discouraged.